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(U) USSR: UNOFFICIAL POLL ON POPULAR
OPPOSITION TO AFGHAN WAR

BUREAU OF
INTELLIGENCE
AND RESEARCH

Summary

An unofficial poll which recently reached the West via samizdat channels said there was widespread popular opposition in the USSR to Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. Secretly conducted last year by human rights activists in Moscow, the poll said that 62 percent of the 287 people interviewed did not support the current Soviet war effort. For obvious reasons, this survey was not a scientific poll in the usual sense; and its results may be exaggerated.

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A group of human rights activists in Moscow conducted three secret polls since 1981 on Soviet popular attitudes concerning, respectively, Academician Sakharov, the Solidarity movement in Poland, and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. Such surveys cannot be conducted openly under Soviet conditions, and many USSR citizens are wary of discussing such sensitive topics. The pollsters developed the following special methodology:

--First, rather than use standard poll protocols, the activists employed unstructured interviews in which those being polled might not have been aware of it. Such an approach may have reduced the problem of simple refusals to answer but also may have distorted the exact number of those who would have refused to cooperate at all, a number that given Soviet conditions could be large. Further, the approach allowed the pollsters--who in this case had their own agenda--to categorize responses, an open invitation to distortion. And finally, such

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an approach could not, of course, capture the intensity of feelings expressed.

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- Second, the pollsters ~~claim~~ activists claim to have excluded from their sample all individuals with family or other ties to the Moscow dissident community. (This approach would seem to make the sample more representative, but it raises questions as to how freely total strangers would respond on such sensitive topics.)
 - Third, the pollsters carefully described the sociological characteristics of those interviewed, permitting a weighting of the sample to make it correspond to the population as a whole. Given the small sample size, however, such projections may be unwarranted.

Clearly, the methodology does not guarantee accuracy, but the steps do suggest that the pollsters made a serious effort to ensure objectivity, and this effort adds to their credibility.

Results of the poll on the Afghan war were published in a third-wave Russian emigré journal (Strana i mir, Munich, No. 12, 1984, pp. 34-36). According to this report, the poll took place in Moscow and its environs in early 1984. The sample was 287 people--166 men and 121 women. Their responses to the question of support for the Soviet military effort in Afghanistan were grouped in categories ranging from unqualified support to outright opposition (see table, p. 3). The pollsters concluded:

- Sixty-two percent of all respondents stated that they did not support the Soviet war in Afghanistan.
- Men were marginally more likely to oppose the war than were women, but also marginally more likely to support it. The women questioned were more likely to state that they were not interested or had no opinion.
- People between 23 and 60 years of age were more likely to oppose the war than those in younger and older age groups.
- People with higher education were more likely to be opposed than those with secondary schooling or less.
- Nonparty members were significantly more likely to oppose the war than party members.

These distribution patterns of popular unhappiness, if not the specific levels, conform to patterns in other Soviet polls on other topics, which adds to the credibility of the data. Nonetheless,

even the levels of public unhappiness reported are unlikely to have any immediate policy consequences. Under certain conditions, however, they may serve as an additional impetus for some future policy shift in a more popular direction.

Unofficial Poll of Support for War in Afghanistan*

	<u>All</u> <u>Questioned</u>	<u>Support</u> <u>War in</u> <u>Afghanistan</u>	<u>Support</u> <u>With Reser-</u> <u>vations</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Interested</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Opinion</u>	<u>Do Not</u> <u>Support</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Not Sup-</u> <u>porting</u>
Age:							
To 23	23	5	2	3	3	10	43
23-45	156	15	20	8	7	106	68
46-60	76	13	13	0	2	48	63
Over 60	32	4	10	0	3	15	47
Men	166	28	27	1	4	106	64
Women	121	9	18	10	11	73	60
Education:							
Higher	26	1	4	2	0	19	73
Middle and below	261	36	41	9	15	160	61
Party							
Members	71	21	19	0	2	29	41
Nonparty	<u>216</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>69</u>
Total	287	37	45	11	15	179	62
Percent	100	13	16	4	5	62	62

*Source: Strana i mir, No. 12, 1984, p. 36, published in Munich.

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